"SELLING MRS. CONSUMER": WOMEN'S MAGAZINES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ADVERTISING, 1890-1917

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ABSTRACT

Women's magazines and advertisers have long had a mutually helpful and interactive relationship. Influence has gone both ways; each party has had a part in shaping the other. This relationship was especially strong in the early years of the advertising industry. Advertising dollars were a definite factor in the expansion of popular women's magazines in the early twentieth century, while these journals contributed to the growth of advertising in special ways.
As part of an effort to understand the development of U.S. advertising, this paper looks at the early influence of popular women's magazines on advertising. Three specific areas in which the women's magazines assisted and shaped the young advertising industry are explored: the editorial support given to advertising within the magazines; the importance of the segmented audience offered by the women's journals; and the innovative efforts of women's magazine publishers in developing market research techniques and applications.

INTRODUCTION

The symbiotic relationship existing between mass market magazines and national advertising in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has come under scholarly scrutiny in recent years (Peterson, 1964; Ewen, 1976; Lears, 1983; and Marchand, 1985). One aspect of this subject which has received insufficient attention is the active role played by women's magazines (and their editors and publishers) in the early development of national advertising. Women's magazines assisted the young ad industry by using and supporting advertising, educating consumers about the value of advertising, working to improve ad copy, leading the field in executing market research studies and providing a clearly segmented audience to national advertisers. While many scholars cite examples from women's magazines in their analyses (especially Ohmann, 1981; Lears, 1983; Wilson, 1983; and Pollay, 1985), the crucial part played by these publications in toto, needs to be more clearly delineated. Such historical analysis also reveals the richness of the women's magazines themselves as source in studying advertising

history.

A mutually beneficial relationship existed between the publishers of women's magazines and practitioners seeking to develop marketing and advertising techniques. While the connection between these two groups stayed strong throughout the twentieth century, embracing both parties up to the present, this paper explores the roots of the relationship, tracing the practices and methods through which the association began. Only thus can this complex relationship be understood, and the influence of each of these parties on the other be known. Advertising undoubtedly affected the shape of the editorial material appearing in women's magazines, although the extent and permutations of this influence has been debated (Friedan, 1963; Schwartz-Cowan, 1983; and Waller, 1987). Here however, the part played by women's magazines in supporting advertising and developing marketing techniques is stressed. Specifically, three key areas in which advertising and the ad industry were affected by women's magazines receive attention: editorial support given to advertisements; the implications of developments in ad psychology about female consumers for women's magazine advertisements; and the leading role played by women's magazine publishers in the development of market research. These areas were chosen to illustrate the innovative and active role played by women's magazines in the early development of advertising.

MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE: ADVERTISING AND MAGAZINES, 1890-1917

National advertising played a crucial role in the growth of the magazine industry around the turn of the century, while mass market publications offered manufacturers an attractive promotional vehicle. The dollars gained from advertising allowed mass market publishers like Munsey, McClure and Curtis to keep the prices of their magazines low, which resulted in larger circulations; ad revenues also smoothed out the financial fluctuations to which magazine enterprises had been prey, affording them greater economic stability. Competition from the new "popular" periodicals forced the older, good quality, expensive journals to relax their prohibitions against advertising. No major circulation magazine succeeded without advertising, which attests to the importance of such financial support (Presbrey, 1929). In return, the national magazines offered national manufacturers the opportunity to publicize their goods, reach wideranging markets, and build brand and trademark recognition. The advertising and mass market magazine businesses grew together.

The years from 1890 to 1917 saw an enormous rise overall in national advertising. While estimates of dollar amounts vary, magazine advertising clearly increased in both volume and dollar

amount, providing publishers and editors with substantial revenues with which to pay contributors and staffers.

Advertising historian Daniel Pope estimates that total advertising dollars in the U.S. rose from $190,000,000 in 1890 to $682,000,000 in 1914 (Pope, 1983). Much of that money was spent in national magazines. The Woman's Home Companion(WHC) reported in 1904 that over $30,000,000 was spent on advertising in magazines. By 1917 that had risen to $45,224,000 (Casson, 1904). The Curtis Co., which kept records of ad income, charted the growth of advertising in their publications starting in 1892 (initially this meant only the Ladies Home Journal(LHJ); the Saturday Evening Post(SEP) was added in 1897, and Country Gentleman in 1912). Curtis Co. alone saw its ad revenues climb from about $500,000 in 1892 to almost $23,000,000 in 1917 (Curtis Co., 1928). What all these numbers show is that advertising generally was increasing in this period, and that magazines were garnering a large share of the dollars being spent to advertise the mass produced goods being marketed nationally. And a large percentage of that revenue, went to the women's journals, cementing the relationship between the two entities (Curtis Co., 1920).

Magazine publishers conceded the value of advertising to their enterprises, but also cited their own role in advertising's phenomenal growth. As one woman's magazine noted in 1904,

> It is not an exaggeration to say that the magazines are to-day the most important factors in the advertising business. What might be called the "New Advertising" dates from ten or twelve year ago, when magazines first became national in their scope. (Casson, 1904).

Magazines assisted advertisers by offering a national audience, editorial support for ads, expertise in print copy, and by developing market research techniques.

ADVERTISING AND WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

Advertising in women's magazines represented a special subset of the industry generally. Some product groups which advertised most heavily were goods with logical appeal to women (soaps, foods, clothing). The methods of advertising to women came under close scrutiny as advertisers attempted to understand the psychology of the female consumer. Women's magazines offered attractive promotional opportunities to manufacturers, and hence were able to command high rates for space in their pages. The magazines themselves responded to the growth of the advertising industry by assisting in copy design, testing, writing about, and guaranteeing items advertised in their pages. The advertisements were drawn toward the front of the book, out of the advertising ghetto which had existed in the last few pages

of most journals. Editors of women's magazines encouraged and welcomed the ads; however, editors retained control over their content and placement, protecting their readers. Led by Edward Bok of LHJ, editors did begin to place the ads in close proximity to editorial(service and feature) material on the same subject, a trend which accelerated through the course of the twentieth century.

Women's magazines shared in the general increase in advertising dollars occurring during this period. Advertisers viewed the women's journals as important promotional outlets (see Waller, 1987 for comparative ad rates for this period). Such heavy use by advertisers gave editors more money to spend on material for the magazines.

Women's magazines took in about a third of the advertising dollars in top US magazines by the end of this period. Curtis Co. began keeping comparative ad revenue figures in 1914, tracking revenues for the thirty-six top magazines, a fairly good sample in this time of high concentration of advertising dollar). Calculating from the Curtis figures (one of the best sources), advertising in women's magazines as a percent of advertising as a whole stood as follows:

1914: 32.2%; 1915: 32.0; 1916: 33.0; 1917: 32.1.

Prior to 1914, the figures are sketchier, yet still show women's magazines to be an important recipient of advertising dollars (Curtis, 1920).

Women's magazines were effective conveyors of advertiser's messages. An 1892 study done by the N.W. Ayer agency of mail order sales attributable to advertising revealed that the top three sellers were Delineator, Ladies Home Journal and Ladies Home Companion (later WHC). Respectively, they yielded sales of 18.4, 9.5 and 5.4 times the amount invested in advertisements (Hower, 1949).

In the 1870's and the 1880's, little expert attention was given to ad copy, other than the directive to keep an ad simple and direct. These early ads were often very literally "announcements." Little theorizing about advertising copy occurred; ad agents spent most of their time convincing manufacturers of the value of advertising. Most ads provided straightforward information, and assumed that the potential purchasers were individuals who had already decided to buy the product. With the exception of some of the patent medicine advertising, few examples of persuasive selling techniques in advertising existed.

In the 1890's, with the encouragement and work of publishers such as Curtis Co and Crowell Co., advertisements began to look better. Typography, illustrations and careful layouts came to characterize some of the better known ads. Improvements in technology contributed to higher quality ads. Design of copy, layout and artwork often lay in the hands of the publishers. Cyrus Curtis, and his ad manager John Thayer, worked extensively on ad design (Thayer, 1910). Crowell Co., in a promotional brochure noted that "The workmen in this department (typesetting) have especial skill in the art of

"setting up" advertisements," (Crowell Publishing Co., 1903). The publishers recognized the importance of taking responsibility for promoting and ensuring the quality of advertising.

Ad men on periodicals were instrumental in building up the use of national magazines by manufacturers. Such individuals working for women's publications included John Adams Thayer and Thomas Balmer (of Curtis, then Butterick publications), and George Hazen (of Century, later chair of the board of Crowell Publishing Co.).

Women's magazine editors solicited and encouraged use of advertising in their publications. The presence of these ad managers on the magazines testifies to the importance of this aspect of the business. As early as the nineties, ads run by the women's magazines, complete with their circulation figures appeared in contemporary trade journals such as Profitable Advertising. Another favorite spot for advertisements was in the pages of other women's magazines.

Many publishers talked specifically about the value of advertising in women's magazines. In 1913, Curtis published a persuasive brochure for advertisers called "Selling Efforts," which noted the influence and accomplishments of the Curtis publications. This included a special section on advertising to women, which ended with an economic argument, proving how much cheaper it was for a manufacturer to advertise his product through the LHJ than to use other promotional methods (Curtis Co., 1913).

In 1898, Crowell Co. put out a pamphlett describing their growth in which they emphasized the importance of the Woman's Home Companion (Printer's Ink, 1898). Their 1903 brochure, directed at advertisers, described the facilities and organization of the company, then pointed out the wisdom of advertising in a woman's magazine:

> It has become a recognized fact that the publications designed with a view to interest women are the ones that will carry the message of the advertiser to the actual consumer in a more effectual manner and quicker than almost any other means of publicity (Crowell Co., 1903).

The pamphlet then pointed to the large circulation of WHC, the quality of its contents, and the potential of its subscribers as consumers. The booklet also offered guidance about advertising policy, and stressed Crowell's knowledge of ad typesetting, information about their rates, etc.

Such promotional activity increased, with Ayer's Directory a favorite outlet for advertising of ad rates and circulation. By 1914, Ayer's Directory carried ads for a variety of women's magazines including The Gentlewoman, The Mother's Magazine, Harper's Bazaar, The Farmer's Wife, The Housewife, The Ladies Home Journal, and others. Publishers such as Curtis spent large amounts of money publicizing the LHJ, to potential readers, but also to potential advertisers (Curtis Co., 1928; Steinberg, 1979).

EDITORIAL SUPPORT OF ADVERTISING BY WOMEN'S JOURNALS

The editorial backing given to the ads played an important role in fostering product awareness and acceptance and in the development of advertising. Editors began to support ads by placing them strategically, next to editorial articles focused on the same subject. Women's magazines led others in this practice. Edward Bok of the LHJ had initiated this practice of breaking up stories and articles in the magazine, forcing readers into the back pages. While such mingling was a good business idea, the first instance occurred fortuitously, due to an overlong article in 1895. As Bok later noted, "He realized that if he could run some of his front material over the the back he would relieve the pressure at the front, present a more varied contents there, and make his advertisements more valuable by putting them next to the most expensive material in the magazine," (Bok, 1921). Bok and other editors soon became aware of the value of compelling readers to leaf through the back pages carrying the numerous ads while attempting to finish articles and stories. It was a short step to juxtaposing ads and articles featuring the same subject matter.

By the late nineties Profitable Advertising noted,

> "...it is claimed for publications of the Ladies Home Journal, Woman's Home Companion, and Ladies' World class, that their pages offer special inducements to advertisers from the fact that most of the advertising is not only alongside of reading matter, but when pages are properly made up, is contiguous to the department to which it is most nearly akin (Profitable Advertising, 1898:50).

The writer went on to list the advantages to the advertiser of such a scheme: the reader's mind is occupied with the subject and thus more susceptible to the idea of buying; the reader can skip whole departments (and advertisements) that are uninteresting to her; and finally, this careful placement next to an article "insures that it will be seen and read by those who would not wade through solid pages of advertisements that are bunched together in the regular magazine style." The encroachment of commercial material on the sacred pages of literature may have been resented by some readers, but from a business perspective it made eminently good sense. By the teens advertisers began asking for this kind of placement even from editors who had held back from doing so (Waller, 1987).

Strategic placement of advertisments represented a subtle support of advertising. Women's magazines also provided more concrete assistance: each of the major women's journals typically guaranteed the goods advertised in their pages. The growing number of advertisements appearing in magazines and newspapers could be

confusing to a consumer. But with editors explaining the usefulness of these ads, and publishers guaranteeing their veracity, women learned to trust the ads appearing in their journals. Since most early advertising was scientific and informational in nature, the editors believed that such advocacy assisted their loyal readers, as well as helping the magazine. Editors and publishers retained a certain amount of power, and could ban any advertising which appeared false; the magazines solicited complaints from their readers on this issue.

Good Housekeeping provided the most clear-cut example of product guarantee offered by a publisher, with its Testing Institute, and Seal of Approval. Only approved products could advertise in its pages. In response to perceived reader needs, in 1901 Good Housekeeping established an Experiment Station (later the Good Housekeeping Institute). The station initially endeavored to test the usefulness and applicability of the housekeeping methods and products written about in the magazine. The staff performing the tests soon saw that before they could ensure a satisfactory outcome in cleaning, cooking or other phases of homemaking, they needed to be certain that the materials and equipment used in each practice were themselves reliable. For example, the staff felt that they could not editorially advise on the best way to wash dishes, if they had not offered some guidance on the best brand of dish washing soap. In 1902, GH announced that henceforth it would be their policy only to accept advertisements for products which had been tested and passed on by their editors (Fisher, 1935). This service was expanded in 1912, with the addition of Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, former chief chemist for the U. S. Department of Agricultural, to the GH staff. Under Dr. Wiley a Seal of Approval for products tested and found satisfactory was instituted.

Woman's Home Companion in the 1890's regularly ran a paragraph stating that they stood behind the products featured in the magazine, and continued to do so in the early twentieth century. By 1912, McCall's ran a product guarantee on their Contents Page in every issue. They asserted that they accepted ads only from reliable firms, and asked subscribers to write and tell them if they had any problems (Waller, 1987).

Curtis Co. maintained an editorial policy of protecting their readers against advertising frauds. They guarnateed LHJ's ads in 1901, carefully screened the advertisements printed, and offered to reimburse readers for any losses they suffered from buying products advertised in the Journal's pages (Curtis, 1913). However, due to the caution which the company exercised about letting advertisers into their pages, this situation rarely occurred.

Delineator editor Charles Dwyer published a blurb in his editorial column commenting favorably about advertisements:

The value of the Delineator's advertisements is not at all

> sentimental. I believe that any woman who is the hard-worked purchasing agent for a real, live, clamorous, growing family (to be the purchasing agent of a great national railroad, with clerks and typewriters at command, is play in comparison) appreciates such an array from which to make her selection...(Delineator, 1906).

This paean to advertising is common. Such comments appear in almost every issue of The Delineator around the turn of the century, heralding the usefulness of advertising, trademarking, etc. The magazine also warned of the terrible evils of "substituting", i.e. buying a good without a brand label.

WHC similarly educated its readers. A full page in the September, 1912 issue was devoted to the subject of advertising; it explicitly laid out the position of the magazine: advertising helped the woman as the "purchasing agent of the home", while "The publisher accepts only proper advertisements, because he knows that this is the only sane policy..." Further protection was provided because,

> When the reader of the Companion buys anything advertised in the pages of the magazine, and is dissatisfied, the Companion returns the money to her. The Companion vouches for the honesty of its advertisers, and it vouches for the honesty of its readers. Both are on honor (WHC, 1912).

Since the reader could rest easy in the knowledge that all the ads appearing in the magazine had been carefully screened, she was free to look at the benefits of advertising. The editorial called advertising "business news," and cited the advantages of knowing product features, price and place of goods manufactured all over the country. The editorial pointed out that advertising paid for itself by increasing the volume of goods purchased, which allowed manufacturers to employ economies of scale. The magazine clearly supported and endorsed the ads. The ads provided information about new products, and the magazines mediated that process by also commenting about the product, and guaranteeing the ads.

This printed journalistic support by WHC was reciprocated; Borden's Eagle Condensed Milk used one of the Companion's "Better Baby" winner's in its ads (WHC, 1915). When Beech-Nut displayed pictures of their manufacturing process in their ads, they specifically noted that the series was directed to the readers of the WHC (WHC, 1916).

The magazines were powerful enough to refuse ads they felt would harm their readers. LHJ, the strongest of the women's magazines, banned patent medicine advertising in 1893, refused to give rate discounts to large advertisers, decreased reliance on ad agents and reduced the commission of those agents used. As early as 1894, LHJ disallowed ads which were designed to look like editorial material. Curtis made clear that what the editorial department did was separate

from the advertising department, and he prohibited editors from accepting gifts or samples of products. In 1910, Curtis published the Curtis Code, a guideline for acceptable advertising (Steinberg, 1979). The other magazines, while not as powerful as Curtis, followed that company's lead, and exerted some controls over the ads appearing in their pages.

But while Curtis and Bok asserted their independence of the advertisers, both were former admen, and recognized the importance of the ad dollars to their publishing ventures; like the other magazines, they supported the advertisers in various matters. The Journal placed ads in proximity to relevant editorial features. Ad salesmen from Curtis apprised manufactures of upcoming features which might tie in with their product. If a number of readers wrote in about an item, Curtis would try to obtain ads for this good. The size of the Journal, 11" by 16", was criticized by readers, but applauded by advertisers; it remained outsize until 1913, when it was reduced, (only to be enlarged again in 1921)(Steinberg, 1979). The Journal experimented with semi-monthly publication, to allow advertisers to appear more frequently (Mott, 1938). Bok and Curtis maintained businessmen's perspectives on the uses of advertising to promote their magazine and to bring in revenue.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADVERTISING

A second link was forged in the relationship between women's magazines and advertising with explorations into the psyche of the consumer. Studies in the specialized field of advertising to women stemmed from the contemporary interest in discovering the scientific principles behind advertising and its effects. When researchers discovered that women made most of the buying decisions, attention turned to advertising effectively to women, or, as home specialist and LHJ editor Christine Frederick put it, "Selling Mrs. Consumer," (Frederick, 1929). As one ad specialist noted,

> Good advertising is the advertising which adapts itself to the conditions of the buyer, and as long as most of the buyers are women, and most of the goods are sold through woman's influence, advertising for women to women will constitute the bulk of all good advertising (Fowler, 1897).

And women's magazines offered the best medium in which to place those ads directed at women.

Early advertisements were designed to convey information. Throughout, the late nineteenth century, and the early twentieth century, the "rational school" of advertising predominated in the creation of ad copy (so called because it believed that advertisers should appeal to man's reasoning capacity). The function of an ad,

according to proponents of this theory, was to educate consumers, telling them where an item was available for purchase at a particular price. The ad might also relay to the reader the uses of a particular good. Consumers were believed capable of making their own decisions about the product (Curti, 1967; and Kuna, 1976).

At the turn of the century, psychologists entered the field of advertising, and with their appearance as advisors, two developments occurred. First, psychologists focused less on use of space, layout, and design, and more on the reader's reaction to the advertisement, as measured scientifically and experimentally. Secondly, they fed the nascent trend toward the use of suggestion and persuasion in ads. This theory held that an advertisement should not merely inform, but should actually activate a desire. Initially ads using a persuasive appeal were in the minority, but gradually more and more ads used this technique; by the early twenties it had gained predominance. The shift toward persuasive advertising was accelerated by the new national character taken on by the previously regional advertising. Persuasive selling techniques suited national advertising better than the simple recounting of information (Curti, 1967; and Pope, 1983).

With increased focus on the non-rational thought processes of the potential customer, and with the involvement of psychologists, the female consumer and her psyche became the center of much interest, speculation and research. Men too were analyzed, and ads were aimed at certain "universal" traits. But the experts considered women to be especially "persuadable," "suggestible," "sellable."

Advocates of both schools of advertising acknowledged the importance of the female market. One of the first to recognize the special role of woman as the primary consumer (and hence focus of advertisements) was ad man Nathaniel Fowler. Fowler drew on his extensive experience in advertising to assert that the best way to sell a good was a direct pitch at women; he also underscored the usefulness of women's magazines in this effort. As he noted in Printer's Ink, as early as 1891, "During my career as an advertising expert I have over and over again attempted to reach the men through the women, and by advertising in publications supposed to be read almost exclusively by women," (Fowler, 1891).

The first academic psychologist to make an impact on the business world was Walter Dill Scott. Scott studied the effect of ads on readers from a scientific point of view. He was a proponent of the nonrational school; he believed in the powers of suggestion, association and atmosphere, and thought this should underlie the design of ads. Ad writers needed to discover images that would appeal to the reader, pictures or words which would conjure up pleasant feelings, which would then be associated with the product being promoted (Scott, 1908).

Scott's work had special implications for women and the women's magazines carrying ads targeted to females because he believed that suggestion could be used more effectively with women than with men.

In his pioneering study he noted that, "It is quite generally believed that women read advertisements more than men..." (Scott, 1908). Scott categorized the ways individuals make decisions (with purchasing decisions a subset), drawing on the theories of psychologist William James. Women fell into his third category where

> "...the decision is dependent upon a sudden spontaneity of an emotional nature and leaves but little for the advertiser to do... Here the advertiser can do most by appealing to the artistic and sentimental natures of the possible customers (Scott, 1908).

A manufacturer could best reach women through an emotional, suggestive appeal.

Women's magazine publishers themselves capitalized on studies showing that women made most of the decisions regarding purchase of goods. LHJ's research department pointed out in a promotional brochure that, "Woman is charged with the duty of spending 90 percent of the family income, and vexed with many problems incident thereto," (Curtis, 1913).

If, as Fowler noted, "Woman is the buyer of everything," then advertising copy must increasingly be directed to her. Scientific study of the way purchasing decisions were made, and the manner in which buyers reacted to ads both must be conducted with an eye toward the female, thus affecting the nature of the ads. Advertisers felt that women preferred few details or technicalities, and were more likely than men to follow commands or directions. Women needed to be appealed to through their emotion, not their intellect (Woodward, 1938). Illustrations were considered especially useful in advertising to women. Ill-informed, emotional and suggestible, females also paid more attention to advertisements: "The woman who will not read advertisements is not a woman," claimed Fowler (Fowler, 1897).

This emphasis on the female market made women's magazines an especially attractive media choice, as they could offer a clearly segmented market to advertisers. The content of the ads appearing in the women's magazines changed, due to the new theories about how advertisements influenced readers. Copywriters and illustrators began to create with female psychology in mind, as advertising theorists postulated the steps taken by women in the decision making process. Examples of both schools are present in the advertising of the women's magazines of the early twentieth century (Waller, 1987)

One other effect of the attention to females and their publications has been pointed out by women's magazine staffer and ad writer Helen Woodward. She attributes the early twentieth century trend toward cleaner, more attractive ad copy to the realization that women were the target of these ads. As the ads were increasingly directed to women, they had to more visually appealing. This led to improvements in design and execution of the ads (Woodward, 1938).

MARKET RESEARCH

While publishers, ad practitioners and academic psychologists started to analyze the components of effective advertisements directed to women, a related development began, also drawing on scientific and academic methods to help advertisers better understand their market. This field, the embryonic area of market research, focused on the total market, rather than the individual shopper. Work in this area, as in the psychology of advertising, was carried on by several different organizations: magazine publishers, ad agencies, independent contractors, and eventually the manufacturers themselves. Women's magazine publishers led the way in these efforts. These early research efforts consisted primarily of collection of ad revenue and circulation figures, demographic data on readers, and product markets studies of goods advertised in these journals.

The first market research study was performed in 1879, when the N.W.Ayer advertising agency attempted to take from rival Rowell, the business of threshing-machine manufacturer Nichols-Shepard of Battle Creek, MI. Ayer's successfully collected information about Nichols-Shephard's markets and won the account (Hower, 1949). Shortly after Ayer's venture, other ad agents began to collect data on the industries for which they wrote ads; they tracked sales to see which ads worked most effectively, in which publications. Ad agencies involved in developing these techniques included the Mahin Agency, Lord and Thomas, and J.Walter Thompson (Liess, Kline and Jahlly, 1986; and Coolsen, 1947). They (as well as the publishers and manufacturers) were undoubtedly influenced by the fascination with facts and statistics which characterized the Progressive era.

Most manufacturers were slow to establish their own market research departments. Some advertising managers for the manufacturers, seeing the value of this kind of information, set themselves up as independent contractors, offering to conduct industry surveys, and studies of sales patterns; this path was taken by R.O. Eastman, ad manager for the Kellogg Company of Battle Creek. J. George Frederick, former editor of Printer's Ink, founded the Business Bourse in 1908, an important research and publishing organization (Lockley, 1950).

Despite the efforts of other individuals and agencies, the major force in establishing the respectability and value of market research was the magazines publishers themselves who developed the first important market research departments. Magazine publishing companies controlled and maintained access to the crucial information about reader markets, product markets and ad revenue. They established these units to assist advertisers, whom they recognized as vital to the magazine publishing business. But the research and the methods remained in the hands of the publisher. While some of these publishers put out other magazines, in the most cases, their

women's journals were their most profitable publications, and they focused much of their attention on gaining data relevant to these publications.

The Curtis Co, took the lead in this field. Edward Bok and Cyrus Curtis conducted some rudimentary market research in the 1890's, to determine the neighborhoods in which LHJ readers lived. They performed these studies in order to attract higher quality advertising (Steinberg, 1979). Thomas Balmer, working for Curtis at the turn of the century, did some independent market research, which he then used to advise potential advertisers (he analyzed six hundred instances where advertising had failed to yield satisfactory results and concluded that the three major reasons for ad failure were ads too small in size, one-time ads, and a lack of follow-up on the results from the ads).

In 1911, Curtis Co. established a separate Commercial Research Division under Charles Coolidge Parlin. The influence and preeminence of this department, and the studies produced there forged another link in the relationship between advertising and the magazine industry. Curtis, both a far-thinking rational businessman, and an individual with a national perspective, recognized that industries needed economic, demographic, sales, and advertising figures if they were to advertise effectively. The Curtis Commercial Research Division provided information of two kinds, First, they gave advertisers facts about their markets, thus encouraging them to advertising nationally. The reports were careful to note that the Curtis magazines (including LHJ)reached those very same markets. Thus data collected by the department was used to assist manufacturers in more efficient use of their advertising dollars.

The research department also collected figures on advertising dollars expended in magazines, among which Curtis publications led the list. The first such report was generated in 1914. This information was distributed to Curtis space salesmen for use when soliciting ads for the magazine. This 1914 effort proved to be the first in a continuing series of studies demonstrating the desirability of Curtis publications to advertisers. These figures reveal a high concentration of advertising dollars in the Curtis publications. In the thirty-six top publications listed, 48% of the ad dollars went to Curtis publications (Curtis, 1920). Curtis' share was smallest in the women's magazine category, reflecting the large number of good women's journals providing competition: LHJ held 32% of all ad dollars going to women's magazines in 1914, reached a high of 37% in 1918, and fell to 33% by 1920. Collection of these figures points up Curtis' belief in the use of numbers, and his understanding of the psyche of the potential advertisers, who clamored for space in these attractive publications which other advertisers were using.

Backed by the Curtis organization, Parlin developed and applied innovative techniques to the study of markets. He began systematically collecting and analyzing information on various

industries, to aid manufacturers in their advertising and marketing strategies. His first studies were industry analyses of the farm implement market (1911), a study of department stores (1912), and, in 1914, a report on the automobile industry. These studies, while sometimes crude by the market research standards of the present, offered valuable new information and guidance to manufacturers concerning places to advertise and market their goods. It was small wonder that manufacturers liked to advertise in Curtis publications and reap the benefits of this research and expert advice. All these reports also assisted the advertising industry by providing ideas and a model of the kind of research which could be done.

Even in the earliest years of Curtis' research department, women and their journals received special attention. In Curtis' annual report on advertising expenditures in magazines, one segment was always devoted to "Advertising in LHJ and other Women's Publications." One of Parlin's earliest studies focused on the purchases of LHJ's clothing patterns. In 1913 Curtis Co. published a booklet based on information from the research department, called "Selling Efforts," which clearly demonstrates their understanding of the significance of the female subscriber. Addressed to prospective advertisers, one part is titled "Advertising to Women." This section opens by stressing the importance of women as decision-makers in the purchasing process, reinforcing what advertisers themselves were recognizing: women formed the majority of the consumer market. After pointing out that the LHJ had been, "For twenty-nine years...the buying guide of millions of women..," the pamphlet went on to emphasize the number and caliber of women reached by LHJ (Curtis Co., 1913)..

The findings of market research practitioners seemed exciting and eminently useful, a real scientific advance. Curtis Co. established the first full-fledged research department, but other publishers of women's magazines soon followed. Crowell Co., publishers of Woman's Home Companion, started a formal research department by the twenties and had been collecting data and employing research techniques as early as the first decade of the twentieth century.

The reports they put out (national market surveys and circulation figures, similar to those of the Curtis organization), included data for the magazine dating back to 1913. They had been keeping records early, but only later, pushed by competition with Curtis, did they pull the information together in reports for advertisers. Crowell made special mention of the scientific basis of their research:

> Intimate and detailed knowledge of every part of that (national) market, both its sales possibilites and the cost of reaching it, is the basis of every Crowell campaign. Guesswork has been eliminated and the results, which always follow accurate knoweldge of a market, have come with almost mathematical precision (Crowell, Co.,

1922).

By 1908, the WHC staff had a geographic breakdown and analysis of their readership for their use. In 1914, they conducted what was one of the earliest consumer surveys, formally called The Reader Survey (the editor's used the term "correspondence convention to the readers). They mailed their subscribers a questionnaire, asking their preferences about authors, various features in the magazine, departments, the fashions,etc. Readers filled this survey out and returned it to the publisher. Some of the results were reported in the magazine and the entire results were tabulated and analyzed for the editorial staff of the magazine (WHC 1914; and Carruth, 1914). This application of quantitative techniques to study of consumer preferences was a method which became increasingly prevalent. Although not always valued by editors, many in the advertising field and business side of the magazine, as well as some editors, felt more comfortable in running their business using some numerical data. The management of the WHC was clearly aware of the usefulness of survey research techniques in improving the magazine, and making it more responsive to readers.

In 1915, WHC fiction Hayden Carruth recommended that the magazine perform an annual competitor analysis of the features and stories appearing in other women's magazines. Specifically, he suggested a quantitative content analysis of their rival's publications. The statement at the end of his proposal revealed that such research was being carried out in one area of the organization:

> The advertising departments of almost all kinds of periodicals I believe keep such records with regard to their own field, so I can't help thinking that something of the sort would be advisable to the editorial department (Carruth, 1915).

Thus research and data collection was prevalent in the world of women's magazines, and its usefulness recognized.

Publishers and advertisers alike perceived that research on product markets and reader demographics would carry both industries forward. The skillful way in which this research was used by Curtis Co, spurred other publishing companies to set up similar departments. McCall's and Hearst established departments in the late twenties and thirties, as such research became an established feature and a point of competition (Waller, 1987).

The early market research surveys were rudimentary. By the twenties, most of the studies conducted by women's magazine publishers were designed with two purposes: 1) to convince manufacturers of the importance and effectiveness of advertising generally; and 2) to point up the advantages of magazine as opposed to radio as an effective advertising medium. By the thirties, the magazine industry had entered a more competitive phase, and the

market research reports of this decade reflect that thrust. Increasingly, the research conducted by women's magazine publishers was directed against one another. Each publisher attempted to prove that he had the highest quality readership. By the end of the thirties, responding to the competition for ad dollars, the reports issued by the publisher's research departments had become sophisticated, and fell into four categories:1) Reports of comparative figures on ad revenues and circulation; 2) Listing of demographic (geographic, income, age, etc) characteristics of a magazine's buyers; 3) Comparative analysis of customer magazine buying patterns; surveys asking readers which magazines they preferred, trying to find out who was reading what and why. 4) Promotional pamphlets directed at the magazine industry and to potential advertisers (Waller, 1987).

CONCLUSION

Women's magazines affected the development of advertising around the turn of the century by their practices in several areas. First, the journals supported advertising editorially, and played a significant role in educating their readers about the functions of the ads.

Second, women's magazines took at special role because of the purchasing potential of their audience. As academicians and businesspeople discovered that buying decisions fell to the American housewife, their focus centered on the psychology of the female consumer and ways to reach her. Because women's magazines reached this target group quite directly, they became an attractive media for advertisers. Women's magazines commanded the highest ad rates (per page and per ad), due to their large circulations and the consuming potential of their readers.

Publishers of women's magazines led in the development of market research. They collected economic, demographic, circulation and sales information in the early twentieth century to better understand their readers and their markets. WHC carried out one of the earliest reader preference surveys in 1914. Companies such as Curtis Co. and Crowell Co. recognized the utilty of such studies for their staffs and also for their advertisers. They were innovators in market research techniques and the scientific gathering of data.

Women's magazines assisted the development of early advertising in a number of other ways. Publishers of these journals promoted advertising both by soliciting for ads to appear in their publications and by using advertising to promote their own magazines. Personnel on these journals worked to improve the technical aspects of the ads. The magazines developed innovative marketing techniques to attract readership. Overall, women's magazines gave a significant boost to the young advertising industry.

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